

Hotaling Building
451-461 Jackson Street
San Francisco, San Francisco County
California

HABS No. CAL-1475

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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HOTALING BUILDING

San Francisco, San Francisco County, California

ADDRESS: 451-461 Jackson Street (now listed as 451)
OWNER: Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lawenda
OCCUPANT: Various Wholesale Decorator Suppliers
USE: Offices and Display Rooms

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Hotaling Building has an important place in the 19th century architectural history of San Francisco. Begun in 1866, it represents an especially fine example of the rich Italianate buildings of brick, with cast iron facades, which dominated commercial design in the 1860's and 1870's. Its builder was Anson Parsons Hotaling, head of A. P. Hotaling Company, wholesale dealers in spirits and tobacco. After a long and active career as the headquarters of the firm, the building entered a period of gradual decline following the fire of 1906. Its revival to glory, in a form which actually far surpassed the ambition of A. P. Hotaling Company's time, dates from 1952 when the building was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lawenda as a center for their wholesale decorative and design firm, Kneedler-Fauchere. This far-sighted and intelligent restoration of a prime group of buildings, on what came to be called Jackson Square (the area east of Montgomery Street), by a group of design and decoration houses, sparked the revival of an historically and architecturally prominent part of San Francisco.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The structure was built for Anson Parsons Hotaling, who was born in 1826 (or 1827) and came to San Francisco in 1852 on the clipper ship,

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Racehound, out of New York City.¹ At first a clerk in a wholesale liquor store, he went on to a partnership with J. W. Griffin. The firm's headquarters was then on the northeast corner of Sansome and Jackson Streets; numerous Directories of the later 1850's and early 1860's carried their advertisements for wines, liquors (notably Bourbon whiskey) and cigars. By 1865, when the firm was known as A. P. Hotaling Company, the one story structure at the northeast corner of Sansome and Jackson proved inadequate for the rapidly expanding business of the company. (This was related to the expensive entertaining with spirits and tobacco which marked the shift from the Gold Rush to the Bonanza Age of Silver in the 1860's and later.) In 1866, foundations of granite were laid for a three story brick building on the south side of the Jackson Street block west of Sansome.²

This is the structure generally called the Hotaling Building, prior to its present conversion to the headquarters of a group of design and interior decoration firms. However, there is confusion for the modern reader of the Directories as to the location of the firm of A. P. Hotaling Company. It is consistently listed as 431 Jackson Street after 1867, through the 1870's. The listing further specifies: "corner of Jones Alley" (now Hotaling Place). The present address of the building is 451 Jackson; photographs of the building (post 1906 fire) show a front with the numbers 451-461. A billhead of 1882 at the California Historical Society shows the address as 429-437 Jackson Street, and Hotaling Place. Hotaling built the smaller building directly east of the Hotaling Building (429) and used the building which is to the west, across Hotaling Place. The billhead numbers would seem to incorporate the principal building at 431 Jackson and these structures. The present number of 451 (and the now discarded 461) for the Hotaling Building proper appears to date from after the 1906 fire.

The Hotaling Building was constructed on land which had once been the shoreline of Yerba Buena Cove - recovered gradually to extend downtown property to a new limit farther east. This Jackson Street fill might have seemed to pose certain foundation problems; but a number of substantial brick buildings were constructed along this same side of Jackson Street in the 1860's - filling in the gap between the less pretentious brick buildings on the east side of Montgomery, south and north of Jackson, on the north side of Jackson east of Montgomery, and the large public buildings farther south and east (such as the Custom House-Post Office of 1855). All of these "newer" brick buildings, many with cast iron facades like the Hotaling Building itself,

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escaped complete destruction in the earthquake and fire. The interiors were easy to restore because of the simple structure of the buildings. It is difficult to ascertain how much interior damage was done to this particular sector of San Francisco; old photographs suggest that it was spared complete gutting by fire. This is implied also in the famous jingle written by Charlie Field: "If, as they say, God spanked the town, For being over-frisky - Why did he burn the churches down, And spare Hotaling's whiskey?".

Through the early 20th century, the district gradually declined. Once well maintained buildings became dingy warehouses or the center of a New Bohemia. During this period, a Mr. Paganini of 463 Jackson owned the building. In 1951, a group of enlightened designers and importers decided to make Jackson Street into a center of the best of Old San Francisco as a setting for their wares. Dorothy Lawenda of Kneedler-Fauchere, Ted Griffith of Regency House and John and Elinor McGuire of McGuire Company, came together to purchase the old Hotaling Building and other structures nearby. In February of 1952, negotiations with Mr. Paganini were terminated for the Hotaling Building, which Mrs. Lawenda selected to house Kneedler-Fauchere. The building now houses a number of other interior design and import houses, as well as a fabric sales firm. The Hotaling Building emerged as the nucleus of the extremely smart "Jackson Square" group, which sparked a renaissance of prosperity and renovation in the entire area.³

In 1953, a fire broke out after a meeting of the Northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Decorators was held here. It started on the second floor and damaged at least \$25,000 worth of materials on display. Minor repairs of interior and exterior were required; some of the top cornice, in wood, had to be replaced. There have been no major revisions to the building since then.

NOTES (Historical Information)

1. Hotaling was born in New Baltimore, Greene County, New York; the name had originally been Houghtailing. In his time, before coming to San Francisco, he had tried clerking and photography. (see Phelps, Contemporary Biography, p. 305.) He died in 1900.
2. O'Connell, The Inner Man, pp. 54, 55.
3. See article by Jane Adams in Interiors, March 1954, pp. 65-71.

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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

Books:

- Baird, Joseph A. Jr., Time's Wondrous Changes: San Francisco Architecture, 1776-1915, San Francisco, California Historical Society, 1962, p. 46.
- City Directories of San Francisco (various of the later 19th century).
- O'Connell, Daniel, The Inner Man, San Francisco, The Bancroft Company, 1891, pp. 54-55.
- Phelps, Alonzo, Contemporary Biography, San Francisco, The Bancroft Company, 1881, pp. 305-308.
- Turner, Matthew, The Builders of a Great City, San Francisco Journal of Commerce Publishing Company, 1891, pp. 212-215.
- Woodbridge, John and Sally, et al., Buildings of the Bay Area, New York, Grove Press, 1960, unpaginated (see Jackson Square map, section 13 SF).

Newspapers and Periodicals:

- Fortnight Magazine, V.7 (March 1953), "Hotaling Building", p. 33N.
- Interiors, March 1954, pp. 65-71 (article by Jane Adams; photographs).
- San Francisco Chronicle, February 16, 1953.

Reports:

- Snyder, Paul Anne (Mrs.), The A. P. Hotaling Building: report for course on American Architecture, University of California, Davis, January, 1963 Author's collection.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

EXTERIOR

The Hotaling Building was constructed of brick, with walls about twenty inches thick. The dimensions are approximately forty eight feet (north and south) by eighty eight feet (east and west). The principal facade faces Jackson Street, although the Hotaling Place facade has elements of interest also. Along the first story of the

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Jackson Street face are seven cast iron pilasters (marked "California Foundry SF" at the base); two similar pilasters continue around the corner on Hotaling Place. The entablature of this story is simple with a plain architectrave-frieze and deep wood cornice with simple modillions. Characteristic of the Italianate fashion, the pilasters are tall and slender with paneled surfaces and a salient oval boss in the center (now initialed "Kf"), framed with a cartouche. Above, the capitals are modified Corinthian types with elaborate scrolls approximating corner spirals but continuing down into the lower section of the capital; in the upper center is a simple foliate ornament. The bases are plain, but give an effect of reduplication in height. Tall, hinged iron shutters (essentially of wrought iron) swing into deep reveals behind the pilasters, and fold back out of sight. (The shutters are still usable.) There are small eye-level slits in the shutters which legendarily are associated with gun fighting during Prohibition when the building is said to have been used as a warehouse by bootleggers. The iron shutters protect three large windows of four large panes (the glass may be original). Below each window is a horizontal row of four coffers with an octagonal boss in the center (this area, like the mullions above, is of wood). The window wall is independent of the brick and iron facade, so that an open space between is visible at the corner of Jackson Street and Hotaling Place.

The second and third stories are related stylistically and in design; tall, crowded windows suggest Italianate design, as does individual detail. Alternating curved and triangular pediments create an irregular rhythm across each story. The window cornice (and lower cornice of the pediments) in each case is broken in the center; supporting the side sections of cornice are elaborated consoles, and a quasi-console or keystone dominates the center of the broken cornice and its complement of dentils. Below the side consoles are slender paneled pilasters, and just inside the window reveal, which they frame, is a rope motif outlining that reveal. (All of the ornamental parts here are of painted wood, although mastic details were generally more common at this period.) Windows are double-hung, with heavy plate glass in each section - upper and lower. Wrought iron shutters in iron frames fold back beside the windows.

The Hotaling Place face (west side of building) has two windows (one above the other on the second and third stories) at the north corner, echoing the more elaborated stylistic character of the Jackson Street facade. Mastic quoining accentuates the building's corners and the

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short section continuing the facade's design onto the west wall. This quoining is now painted white to complement the plum painting of the building's mastic and brick surface. (Most of the west wall is of plain painted brick.) The balance of the west side is more utilitarian in character. On the ground floor are three door openings headed with flattened arches and keystone, and framed in brick - at the south end of this level; at the north are two windows of unequal size. On the second floor are five windows, and on the third there are four. Of the latter four, only two are actual openings - the others (in the center of the group) have been bricked up. All windows have iron shutters on this face, as on the Jackson Street facade, and it is quite probable that the glass is largely original. Crowning the entire building, but with a short section only at the north end of the west face, is a strongly accented wooden cornice - rising almost three feet above the actual roof line. A small dentil course is broken into even areas by modillions; modillion-brackets set the width of the windows below. Beneath the dentil course and between the brackets is an ornamental paneled section with central raised ornament.

INTERIOR

The principal access to the interior on the north, or main facade, is through tall double doors of glass and wood (now covered with a fabric canopy), slightly off center to the left of this Jackson Street face. A less imposing triple, vertical sectioned door opens into an area at the front, northeast, with the side stair, the elevator, and some of the first floor offices behind. Beyond the main doors is the more important area of the first floor. The western portion of front space in this area was Mr. Hotaling's "office". Small fireplace openings on the west wall were relevant to this "office" - at least the northwesterly one. It is difficult to tell how much floor area Hotaling reserved for himself on this side of the first floor. A contemporary writer described it as: "a typical exponent of the aesthetic tastes of its proprietor. It passes beyond the domain of mechanic art into the realm of the artistic"¹ Hotaling had frescoes, elegant paintings, fine furniture and a large library housed in his building. At the southwest corner of the first floor, a handsome wood staircase rises up along the back wall to the second level. There is a back entrance to the building from Hotaling Place at this corner. In the southeast of the first floor is a large squared light-well rising through four

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floors: the first floor has a modern cover over this area. It was probably used to transfer kegs and other materials from floor to floor. The principal interior support for upper floors, is a massive brick wall running north-south. Three arches almost of ceiling height cut into this wall. The wall provides a front area of two rooms and a rear space of a large double room with the back stair at its south side.

The second floor is similar in its simple, strong construction to the first, although numerous interior partitions of more recent and temporary nature now divide its spacious area into cubicles and display. These same modern temporary dividers occur on the third floor. Above is a stout raftered ceiling with massive wood beams tied into truss forms with iron rods and straps. (Bricks here are painted white; wood, black.)

Floors throughout are of stained soft wood, three inch stock being laid tongue and groove. The firm on the third floor - Kneedler-Fauchere - has leased space in the adjacent building to the south, formerly said to have been Hotaling's stable, etc., but now called the McGuire Building. This was obviously intended to be related to the third floor of the Hotaling Building from the beginning; an opening with sliding iron door provides access to stairs which lead down to this building's third floor, somewhat lower than the third floor of the Hotaling Building. Floors here are of modern linoleum and the ceiling has flourescent light fixtures.

The basement is one of the historically most interesting parts of Hotaling's Building. A network of gas pipes suggests the lighting system of the 19th century. Two strong brick arches are in position directly below where Hotaling's safe was placed. At the southwest corner is an iron foundation for the first elevator, using hydraulic power with electric assists. The ceiling of the basement with flattened arches to support the floor above is but six and one half feet high; and the floor is said to have three layers - redwood, brick and asphalt. The many kegs stored here have left their impression in the asphalt, so that now it seems more like a palimpsest of "good spirits" than an ordinary basement floor. A long narrow tunnel ran north and south all along Hotaling Place at the west side of the basement, with glass inserts in its roof giving on the paving above; and another tunnel crossed, west, Hotaling Place at the basement level to the building across. This latter tunnel and the roof of the north-south tunnel have been modified with Thomas Church's revisions to the paving of Hotaling Place (1963).

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In addition to the present McGuire Building at the south (mentioned above), Hotaling owned the building adjacent to the east. This was a scaled down version of the Hotaling Building with half the width, and two stories only. A common brick party wall unites the two structures, and explains the bricked up windows of the east stairway in Hotaling's own building. (This smaller structure is now owned by Mrs. Louis A. Petri.)

NOTE (Architectural Information)

1. Phelps, Contemporary Biography, pp. 307, 308.

Prepared by,

Joseph A. Baird Jr.

Joseph A. Baird, Jr., PHD
University of California

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APPROVED:

Charles S. Pope

DATE: *November 1964*

Charles S. Pope, AIA
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Western Office, Design and Construction
National Park Service